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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001684

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD  
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;  
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN;  
USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND MARCH 18, 2004 --  
(1600 HOURS LOCAL) -- SIX PALESTINIANS INJURED IN GAZA

THIS IS A JOINT MESSAGE FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN  
JERUSALEM.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) In Gaza, the IDF ended its operation to search for tunnels at 2100 hours March 17. UNRWA reported that six Palestinians were injured in Rafah between 1500 and 2100 March 17.. The Israeli High Court ordered on March 17 that work on the barrier northwest of Jerusalem be postponed indefinitely. No conflict-related deaths or injuries were reported in the West Bank during the reporting period. End Summary.

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West Bank  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: Nil.

-- Injury: Nil.

-- Shooting: Shots were fired at an Israeli car traveling north of Ramallah on March 17. No injuries were reported.

[1](#)3. (SBU) SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS/ARRESTS:

-- The Israeli High Court ordered on March 17 that work on the separation barrier northwest of Jerusalem be postponed indefinitely.

-- Israeli troops arrested 21 Palestinians across the West Bank on March 17.

-- Palestinian activists planned a demonstration against the separation barrier in Deir Qaddis on March 18.

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GAZA  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that an additional six Palestinians were injured during the reporting period during an IDF action to search for tunnels in Rafah that began early on March 17. UNRWA reported that the incursion ended at 2100 hours March 17, when IDF forces withdrew.

-- Mortars/Rockets/Hand Grenades: The IDF reported that a mortar was fired at an IDF outpost near Katif village at 2130 hours March 17. The IDF also reported that an explosive device was found southeast of an IDF outpost west of Rafah at approximately 1600 hours March 17.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported three shootings at IDF soldiers and APCs during the reporting period.

-- Explosions: Nil.

[1](#)5. (SBU) ARRESTS: Nil.

[1](#)6. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians.

-- Erez Crossing was open to Palestinians. Diplomats in vehicles and internationals on foot were allowed to cross on March 17. The Erez Industrial Zone was open, with 3,769 workers entering the Zone on March 17.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed during the reporting period.

-- Karni Terminal was open during the reporting period for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for Palestinian travelers.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint and Toufah checkpoint were closed, according to UNRWA.

17. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

According to the major Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz has ordered a halt to the transportation of containers through the Karni Terminal to Israel after a container with a secret compartment was found at Ashdod port March 17. Israeli officials believe the container, which passed through the Karni Terminal, was used to transport the two Palestinian suicide bombers who killed ten Israelis at the port on Sunday, March 14.

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